

*Office of the  
State  
Fire Marshal*



*1999  
Annual Report*

This public document was published at a total cost of \$2,175.00. 500 copies of this public document were published in the first printing cost of \$2,175.00. The total cost of this document including reprints is \$2,175.00. This document was published by the Office of the State Fire Marshal to inform State Government and the general public of the agency's activities for the 1998-1999 fiscal year. This material was printed in accordance with standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31



# 1999 Annual Report

## Louisiana State Fire Marshal



### Inside this issue:

1998 Fire Statistics	2-3
Plan Review Section	4
Inspection/Investigation Section	5-6
Health Care Section	7
Licensing Section	8-9
Fire Information Section	10
Mechanical Safety Section	11-12
Manufactured Housing Section	13
Miscellaneous	14

**Our Mission Statement:** To protect life and property from the hazards of fire or explosion, to ensure the safety of our citizens in the constructed environment, to provide equal access to disabled individuals and promote the efficient use of energy in commercial buildings.

### Letter from the Fire Marshal

"It's a New Day in Louisiana" and every day is a new day at the Fire Marshal's office. I am honored to be your State Fire Marshal and I want you to know that I am totally dedicated to you; the Fire Service, the Citizens of this State and to the Fire Marshal's office. The Fire Marshal's office is a statewide fire prevention bureau and regulatory authority. However, I have strived to make my office a resource and service agency as well. During my tenure as State Fire Marshal, I have placed a high priority on Public Safety Education, Fire Code Development, Fire Code Enforcement and Service to the Public.

My mission and objective for my office is to protect people, their property and the environment from fire. To reach this goal, my office has been and continues to be reorganized to improve efficiency, provide better service and foster economic growth. I have placed qualified people in strategic positions, mandated credibility and accountability of my staff and developed strong working relationships with the people we serve. However to be the best agency possible, I need your help. I need you as a partner in developing strategies to change people's attitudes about fire. Carelessness and complacency are major contributors to the fire problem. No one believes that fire will strike them. Changing people's attitudes and actions can save lives and prevent injuries due to fire. Together we will be successful.

I hope you find our 1999 annual report to be a valuable tool for managing, planning, education and prevention at the state, parish and local level. This first report highlights area's of concern to the fire service and citizens of Louisiana as well as reflects the accomplishments of my office over the last year. Please call or write my office for suggestions or additional information. The State Fire Marshal's office and staff are committed to reaching the goals stated herein and better serving the citizens and fire service of this state.

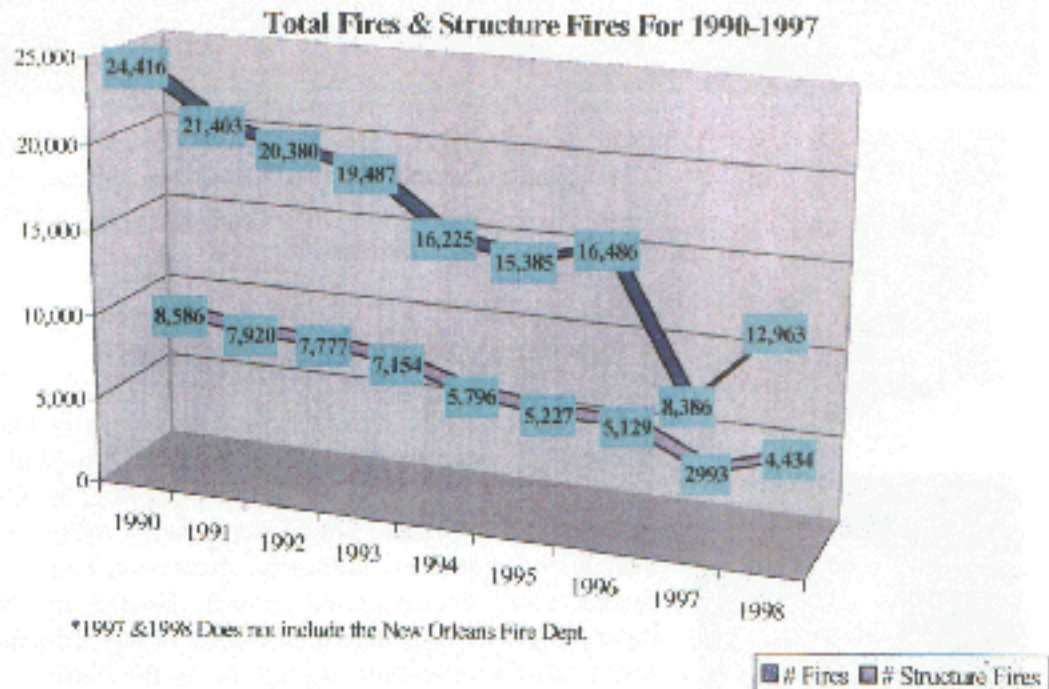
Sincerely,

V.J. Bella, State Fire Marshal

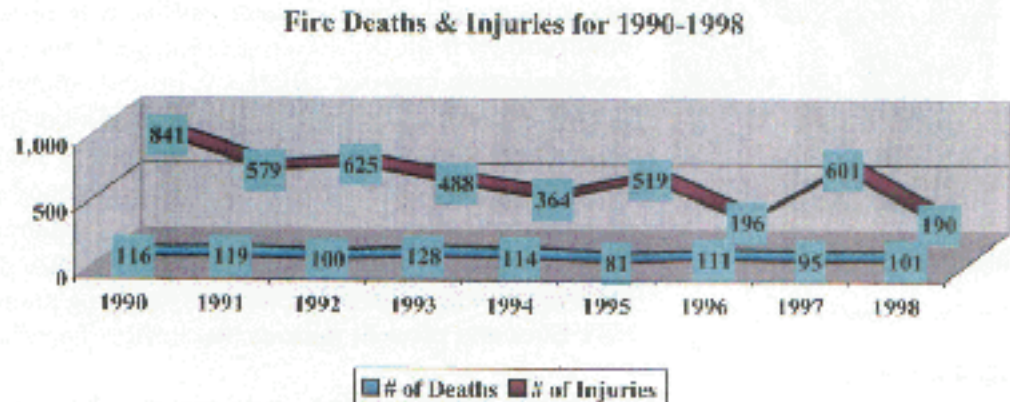


## 1998 Fire Statistics

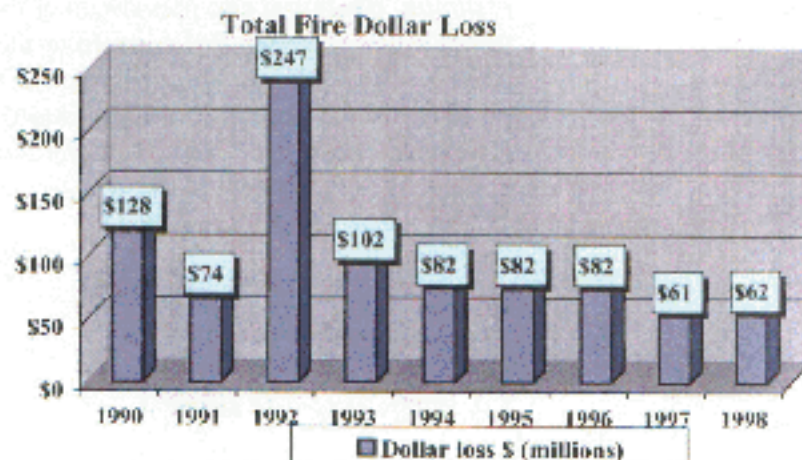
*This line chart shows that the number of fires & structure fires has steadily decreased over the period of 1990-1998. Better fire code enforcement in public buildings has helped to reduce this number.*



*The line chart to the right shows that fire injuries have declined overall from 1990-1998 while fire deaths have stayed fairly consistent.*

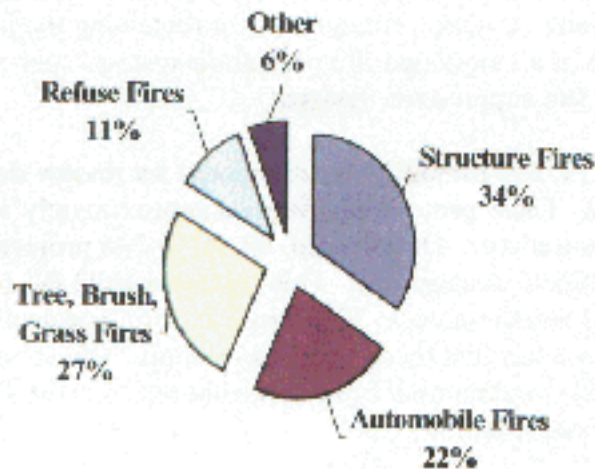


*As the number of fires decrease, the expense of fire to citizens also decreases. This bar graph shows the total dollar loss in millions from 1990-1998.*



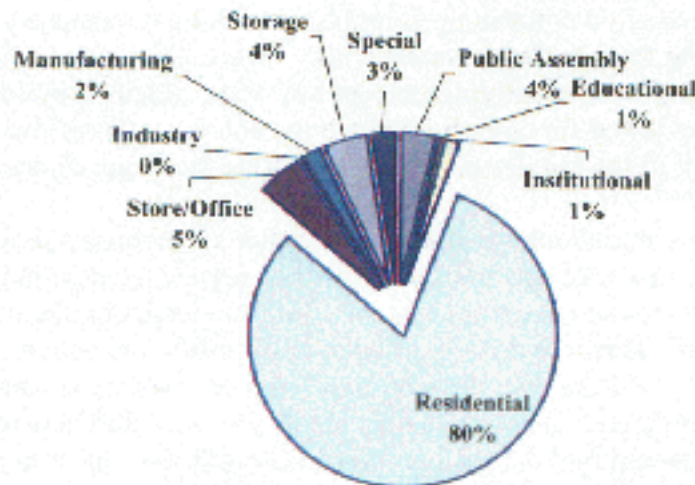
## 1998 Fire Statistics

Total Fires by Type



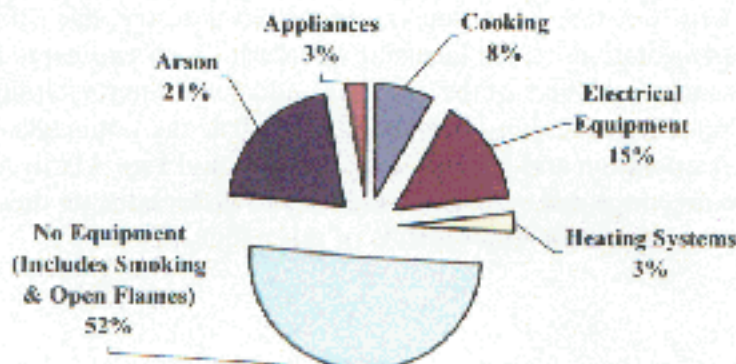
*This pie chart breaks down all 1998 fires by type. Structure & automobile fires together make up over 50% of all fires.*

Structure Fires by Property Type



*This pie chart breaks down all 1998 structure fires by type of structure. Residential fires continue to remain the majority of structure fires.*

Leading Causes of Fire



*This pie chart breaks down the leading causes for fires in 1998. Human action is still the main factor in the cause of fires.*



## Plan Review Section



The Plan Review Section reviews approximately 15,000 plans annually. This represents over 5 billion dollars worth of construction cost in Louisiana.

This section of the office is responsible for the review of all building construction plans in this state to ensure compliance with all applicable State Fire Marshal laws, administrative rules, fire codes and manufacturer specifications. It is also responsible for reviewing the installation plans (Shop Drawings) of all regulated fire protection systems such as fire sprinkler, fire alarm and fire suppression systems.

A total of 14,694 projects were submitted for review during the fiscal year of 1998/1999. These projects represented approximately 5.3 billion dollars worth of construction cost. Of this total, 59.5% (8,746 projects) were submitted by either architects or engineers. This represented 92.8% (4.9 billion dollars) of the total construction cost. The remainder of all projects reviewed by this office were submitted by owners of buildings. Owner submittals accounted for 40.5% of the total number of reviews and represented 7.2% (400 million dollars) of construction cost.

### Accomplishments for the year:

1. During this fiscal year, the Plan Review Section began reviewing documentation confirming compliance with the Louisiana Commercial Building Energy Conservation Code. This code requires energy efficient designing of new buildings except low-rise residential buildings. 1,522 projects were reviewed for compliance with the energy code review. 577 were found to meet all of the requirements for submitting the required documentation.
2. The section took several steps to better serve those submitting plans to this office. One way was to modify the plan review letter to indicate specific deficiencies and general cautionary/informational comments into two distinct sections. This was done in order to help clarify and prioritize the intent of the review. Additionally, the section offered preliminary reviews of large fire alarm projects. This was to help identify serious deficiencies in these projects which would find the project "Not In Compliance" prior to actual plan submittal. This has reduced delays in building construction.
3. Since projects submitted by professional engineers and architects represent such a large portion of the states construction industry, this office met regularly with representatives of the licensing boards for both engineers and architects. Additionally, members of the section conducted numerous training seminars and lectures to professional associations such as the Louisiana Automatic Fire Alarm Association and the Louisiana Burglar and Fire Alarm Association. All of these meetings and seminars were held to better educate these bodies to the plan review and code requirements of this office.



Plan Review Supervisor Don Zeringue  
Verifying compliance with the Life  
Safety Code (NFPA 101).



## Inspections/Investigations Section

This section of the office is comprised of two divisions, the Inspection Section and the Investigations Section. The combination of both sections was accomplished during 1999 to provide a better trained and efficient section.

### Inspections

The Inspection Section is responsible for the inspection of buildings for compliance with National Fire Protection Association codes and standards such as the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101). Additionally the section inspects buildings for compliance with Americans with Disability Act Architectural Guidelines (ADAAG).

### Accomplishments for the year:

1. The section began the automation of scheduling final inspections. Final implementation is to be completed in late June, 2000. Training of personnel is being conducted simultaneously with the implementation process. Additionally, the section centralized the storage of all office policies, procedures and interpretative memos. These documents are being archived into a computer image database which will allow easy access and retrieval. This project will be completed this year.
2. All inspectors were issued laptop computers and are currently using them for code research and inter-office communications. This will increase the efficiency and quality of inspection reports.
3. Six new assistant supervisor positions and one supervisor position have been filled. These positions will increase the level of training and quality control in the section. Because these new positions were filled by field personnel, productivity may decline until new inspectors are hired and trained. Two assistant supervisor positions are presently vacant but will be filled by July 1, 2000.
4. Fines for facilities who fail to comply have been submitted for approval and when initiated will provide approximately \$250,000 in additional revenues. These fees should prove an excellent enforcement tool in ensuring quick compliance with orders of correction.
5. In fiscal year 98-99, a record number of 99,000 inspections were made. The section has been reorganized to increase the number of inspections conducted while ensuring the thoroughness and accuracy of inspection reports.
6. The section reduced personnel turn-over from 28.8% in 1997/1998 to 5% in 1998/1999. This was due in part to an upgrade of the inspector positions through Civil Service.



Inspector Mitch Courville conducting an inspection in an educational facility.



Investigator Scott Basse searches for clues at a fire scene.



## Inspections/Investigations Section Continued

### Investigations

The Investigations Section of the office is responsible for the investigation of suspicious and/or incendiary nature when requested by a local jurisdiction. Additionally, the section must investigate all fires involving multiple deaths.

### Accomplishments for the year:

1. A new computer data base was created for entry and tracking of all arson cases. The data base allows for better case management and review by section supervisors. Additionally, monthly reporting and review procedures were created to ensure that all open arson cases are being actively investigated.
2. The section created and implemented a new reporting system for calls made by other agencies requesting investigative assistance. These calls are reported via fax to the administrative office within 24 hours of notification. This system is used to establish files and provide statistical data which will be valuable for management purposes.
3. The section conducted a evaluation of the location of investigations conducted. From this evaluation, investigators' districts were reorganized to evenly distribute workload. The section also established new "on call" procedures for investigators. With these procedures, investigators will respond more quickly to requests for investigations and ensure cases are resolved in a timely manner.
4. The section began using its new investigation vehicle. This vehicle serves as a command center at major fire scenes. It is fully equipped to handle all the communication and evidence collection needs of investigators on the fire scene.
5. Investigators participated in certified training programs for ensuring quality investigations and increasing the conviction rate for the crime of arson. Additionally, investigators in the section attended numerous training sessions on fireworks displays and licensing. These were held in conjunction with various fire prevention bureaus and State Police Hazardous Materials personnel. The training will ensure statewide uniformity of enforcement.
6. The section created and implemented a new reporting system for all fireworks permits. This system will help coordinate efforts between State Police, fire prevention bureaus and this office.



The Investigation section's new arson investigation and fire scene command vehicle.



These mortars were part of a large cache of fireworks seized for illegal sales.



## Health Care Section

The Health Care section of this office is a specialized section. This section is under contract with the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) to conduct the Life Safety Code Survey process in all health care facilities who receive Medicare/Medicaid funding. This includes hospitals, nursing homes, off-site locations, dialysis clinics, ambulatory surgical centers and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MR) facilities.

All of the inspectors in the Health Care section are dually certified as Deputy State Fire Marshal Inspectors and Health Care Financing Administration (H.C.F.A.) Life Safety Code Specialists.

This office fosters cooperation with those it regulates. This section works closely with health care providers to achieve fire code compliance in health care facilities statewide. However, when a facility fails to achieve compliance, steps are taken to ensure compliance and re-inspections are scheduled. The protection of the lives in these facilities is always paramount during the survey process.

The Life Safety Code Specialists (LSC) are on site to conduct surveys within the time lines dictated by the DHH regional offices as part of the survey team. The survey team consists of several nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, and the LSC specialists.

### Accomplishments for the year:

1. The Section conducted approximately 7,500 inspections this year which included 100% of all nursing homes and ICF/MR facilities. Additionally, all hospitals were inspected for annual licensing and certification.
2. The Section implemented a quality assurance program. This program involves verifying inspectors conducted surveys in a consistent and proper manner.
3. Inspectors were issued laptop computers to increase efficiency and accuracy of reporting. With these tools, the section has reduced errors in inspection reports and provided better written communication with building owners.
4. The Section supervisor met monthly with the Louisiana Nursing Home Association (LNHA) liaison committee consisting of nursing home owners, DHH and this office. The committee meets to discuss and address problems found during the survey process.
5. Inspectors attended training sessions with DHH to improve the survey process. The training was so successful that future sessions will be conducted tri-annually.



Health Care facilities have some of the most stringent safety requirements of all the occupancies regulated by this office.



Inspector Gail Lorio inspecting the fire alarm system at a Baton Rouge area hospital.



## Licensing Section



The new training board donated by the Louisiana Automatic Fire Alarm Association. This board consists of a working fire suppression and fire alarm system to be used for training new staff.

The Licensing Section is responsible for the regulation of the Sprinkler, Fire Extinguisher, Fire Suppression, Fire Alarm and Burglar Alarm industries. Approximately 5,500 firms and individuals are licensed by this section. The section also administers exams to fire protection applicants. Additionally, the section is also responsible to investigate complaints lodged against firms and individuals working in these industries. These investigations may result in administrative penalties and fines being levied against violators.

### Accomplishments for the year:

#### 1. New Fire Protection and Sprinkler Rules

The section created new rules to better regulate the fire protection and sprinkler industries. These rules were the result of the agency and the industries affected working together. Two representatives of the Louisiana Burglar and Fire Alarm Association (LBFAA), the Louisiana Automatic Fire Alarm Association (LAAFAA), the Fire Equipment Distributors of Louisiana and the Louisiana Automatic Sprinkler Association took an active role in the development of the rules. Major changes in the rules include a new tagging policy, an enumerated violation/penalty list and a requirement for the marking of contractor vehicles.

#### 2. Investigations

The section has conducted investigations which have involved over 2000 violations of the burglar alarm, fire protection and sprinkler laws. These investigations have resulted in the issuance of notices of violations which include penalties of fines, warnings, suspension and revocation of licenses. Of all the cases which have been appealed to the Division of Administrative Law, not one case was lost. Additionally, the section created new procedures for investigators/clerical staff for tracking complaints and developing cases for presentation at trial.

#### 3. LBFAA Award

The section was recognized and honored by the Louisiana Burglar and Fire Alarm Association for "Outstanding Service and Commitment to the Alarm Industry. This is a reflection of the section's hard work, professionalism and commitment to service.

#### 4. New Office

The agency opened a new satellite office in New Orleans for inspectors of the section. This office will allow the section to be more efficient as well as respond more quickly to complaints in this area.



Inspector Hank Persick verifies the proper servicing of a fire extinguisher.



## Licensing Section

### Licensing Totals for Fiscal Year 1998-1999

	Number of Applicants	Total Amount \$
Burglar Application Fees	1302	\$ 63,800
Burglar New Firms	114	\$ 22,000
Burglar New Employees	1417	\$ 68,050
Burglar Renewals	1438	\$ 68,150
Burglar Miscellaneous	737	\$ 30,930
Totals	5008	\$252,930
Fire Firms	337	\$ 59,770
Fire Employees	1669	\$ 91,988
Apprentices	135	\$ 4,010
Exams	558	\$ 6,120
Fire Miscellaneous	77	\$ 3,936
Totals	2776	\$165,824
Sprinkler Firms	119	\$ 10,650
Sprinkler Miscellaneous	3	\$ 650
Totals	122	\$ 11,270
Grand Totals	7906	\$430,024



## Fire Information Section



The new NFIR fire reporting system will provide more accurate data regarding the causes of fire in this state.

The Fire Information Section is responsible for collection and management of fire data and statistics for the state. Through the Louisiana Fire Incident Reporting System (LFIRS), the section collects approximately 150,000 incident reports annually from fire departments in the state. Additionally, the section maintains a listing of all the fire departments and fire prevention bureaus throughout the state. It also coordinates all public fire education activities for the office.

### Accomplishments for the year:

#### 1. New Staff Members for Section

The office hired two new employees to oversee the fire incident reporting program. This will allow the office to do in-house data entry of fire reports and retrieval of fire statistics. Additionally, these staff members are responsible for coordinating fire education activities with the fire service through the Louisiana Fire Educator's Council.

#### 2. New National Fire Reporting System (NFIRS)

The section began the implementation of the NFIRS 5.0 version which will allow for all computer reporting of fire incidents the transfer of fire reports via e-mail or the Internet and better retrieval of data. The system was developed by the National Fire Information Council (NFIC) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). The agency takes a active role in all NFIC conferences and training classes.

#### 3. Risk Watch Program

The section began coordinating activities to implement this program in local school systems. Risk Watch is an all injury prevention program designed to reduce injuries and deaths in the following areas: Fire and Burn Prevention, Motor Vehicle Safety, Choking Prevention, Poisoning Prevention, Fall Prevention, Fire Arm Injury Prevention, Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Water Safety. The office is sponsoring this program in state laboratory elementary schools.

#### 4. Safety Program

The section implemented a new office wide safety program. This program involved providing various safety training classes to staff members including defensive driving training, violence in workplace, blood borne pathogens and fire safety. Additionally, new safety equipment was purchased for field staff. The office passed a safety audit conducted by the Office of Risk Management (ORM) and is currently in full compliance with all safety requirements mandated by ORM.



Deputies Boyd Petty and Larry Brown along with Slidell Fire Department staff member, Pam Nash, at the St. Tammany Safety Fair.



## Mechanical Safety Section

The Mechanical Safety section is comprised of two sections, the Boiler Section and the Amusement Section. The Boiler Section is responsible for the proper construction, installation, repair, operation, and safety of the boilers in this state. The Amusement Section is responsible for establishing standards for the installation, repair, use, operation and inspection of amusement attractions and rides for the protection of the public.

### Boiler Section

The section conducted 11,946 inspections for this year. An additional 6,877 inspections were completed by Special Inspectors employed by insurance companies. This total is less than last year due in part to changes in the inspection rules. The total money collected for the year was \$421,652. The breakdown is as follows:

1. Operating Certificates	
Insurance-	\$162,540
State-	\$125,737
2. Inspection Fees (State Applicable Only)	
	\$84,347
3. Miscellaneous Fees	\$49,028
(Licensing, commissions, boiler permits, etc.)	

The total is \$94,268 less than last fiscal year due to a rule change which now exempts small water heaters from inspection requirements. This change reduced the cost to schools, daycares, nursing homes, government and parish facilities.

### Accomplishments for the year:

1. The Boiler Rules and Regulations were re-written in cooperation with the Petroleum-Chemical industry.
2. The section offered the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the National Board Audit training to boiler and pressure vessel fabricators. This provided an estimated savings of \$1500 per review to the 212 fabricators in the State, providing the office with an additional \$90,000 in revenue.
3. The section conducted 4 National Board Exams for 23 individuals attempting to obtain a National Board Commission. This service allowed Louisiana residents to test in state without the cost of traveling out of state.



Boiler explosions can result in total devastation to a building as well as cause severe injuries and even death.



Boiler inspector Mike Galick checking the proper condition of a boiler.



## Mechanical Safety Section Continued

### Amusement Section



Amusement rides can be found at almost all state fairs and festivals.

The section conducted a total of 5701 inspections this fiscal year. This total includes amusement, mobile homes and firework inspections. There were 4035 rides inspected at 352 different festivals and shows. A total of 6695 violations were discovered and corrected. This translates to 1.7 violations per ride. Inspectors issued 207 Red Tags and 29 Cease and Desist Orders for impairments discovered during inspections. This resulted in the closing off part of a ride or attraction to ensure the safety of ride patrons. Eleven civil penalties were assessed and paid.

A total of \$152,714 was collected for the fiscal year. The breakdown is as follows:

State Inspection Fees:	\$76,217
Certified Inspector (NAARSO):	\$65,960
Miscellaneous Fees:	\$10,537

### Accomplishments for the year:

1. Administrative rules were created this fiscal year for the regulation of the Amusement Ride industry. They are currently available on the Fire Marshal web site.
2. The amusement ride law was amended in the 1999 Regular Session to reduce the number of National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO) inspections required. This move will save owners/operators approximately \$125,000 in inspection fees that currently go out of the state. Additionally, inflatables were defined and the inspection requirements for such were outlined in legislation that was introduced in the 1999 Regular Session.
3. The section manager, Bob Cate, has accepted the Vice Chairman position of the Council for Amusement and Recreational Equipment Safety (CARES) group. This group consists of various jurisdictions responsible for the safety of amusement ride/attractions in their state. Bob has headed a task group to provide a method of tracking carnival rides/attractions throughout the United States and Canada to verify safety compliance in all locations.
4. Inspectors in the section received a total 1912 hours of ride operation and safety training during the year.
5. Inspectors assisted the Manufactured Home and Inspections sections in conducting various inspections on the set up of homes and firework stands.



Inspector Sheryl Landry verifying that all safety features are in place on this ride.



## Manufactured Housing Section

The Manufactured Housing Section enforces the "Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards" of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all newly built manufactured homes in this state. It oversees the construction process in the two manufacturing plants in the state, the sale and installation of homes and the licensing of individuals involved in this industry. Additionally, it investigates complaints from consumers regarding faulty homes or their set up. This aides the Consumer and ensures that they are receiving a home that is in compliance with Federal and State laws.

Over the last seven years, the section has seen a steady growth in the number of homes shipped into the state. The number of homes produced in the state has also begun to increase after a two year decline in 1997 and 1998. The following numbers show these trends:

Homes shipped into LA.	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
	5,130	7,548	8,711	11,827	12,495	13,242	14,336

Homes produced in LA.	2,039	2,058	2,464	2,651	1,991	1,552	2,448
-----------------------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

As a result of this growth, the number of consumer complaints has increased as well. This past year saw the section perform a record 574 consumer complaint inspections and successfully resolved 815 complaints with some of these dating back to 1998. The section is now also inspecting the installation of manufactured homes to ensure compliance with tie down and blocking requirements. A total of 771 inspections were conducted and numerous fines were levied against installers for improper set up of homes.

### Accomplishments for the year:

#### 1. The section made the following number of inspections:

In-Plant Inspection	5,454
Dealer Lot Inspections	1,746
Installations	771
Consumer Complaint Inspections	574

#### 2. The section issued the following number of licenses:

Manufactures	100
Dealers	212
Salesmen	766
Developers	13
Installers	205



Manufactured homes now make up 30% of all homes sold in the United States.



Inspector Alton Teesel verifying compliance with blocking and tie down requirements.



## THE ENEMY

*I am more powerful than the combined armies of the world. I have destroyed more men, women and children than all the wars of all nations. I massacre thousands of people every year. I am more deadly than bullets, and I have wrecked more homes than the mightiest guns.*

*In the United States alone, I steal billions of dollars each year. I spare no one and I find my victims among the rich and the poor alike, the young and old, and the strong and the weak. Widows know me to their everlasting sorrow. I loom up in such proportions that I cast my shadow over every field of labor*

*I lurk in unseen places and do most of my work silently. You are warned against me, yet heed me not. I am relentless, merciless, and cruel. I am everywhere, in the home, in the schools, in the factory, on land, in the air, and on the sea.*

*I bring sickness, degradation and death, yet few seek me out to destroy me. I crush, maim, I devastate- I will give you nothing and will rob you of all you have.*

**I AM YOUR WORST ENEMY----**

**I AM RAMPANT FIRE.**



**Office of the State Fire Marshal  
5150 Florida Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806**

**We are on the web at:  
[www.dps.state.la.us/sfm](http://www.dps.state.la.us/sfm)**

### You can reach us at:

Administration:	(225) 925-4911 (225) 925-4241 (Fax)
Plan Review:	(225) 925-4920 (225) 925-4414 (Fax)
Inspections:	(225) 925-4119 (225) 925-3699 (Fax)
Investigations:	(225) 925-4600 (225) 925-3699 (Fax)
Health Care:	(225) 925-4270 (225) 925-3699 (Fax)
Manufactured Homes:	(225) 925-3649 (225) 925-3699 (Fax)
Mechanical:	(225) 925-4297 (225) 925-3699 (Fax)
Licensing:	(225) 925-6766 (225) 925-3813 (Fax)
Fire Information:	(225) 922-0814 (225) 925-4626 (Fax)
Toll Free:	(800) 256-5452

**"Is Yours Working"?  
Smoke Detectors Save Lives !!**



***“It's a new day  
at the Fire Marshal's Office!”***